The applications received in the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs will be examined by an internal committee consisting of a legal advisor and an officer of the rank of Director/ Deputy Secretary and approved by Secretary. Thereafter, the Ministry will recommend the case of Mission concerned to provide legal aid support. The applicant would also be informed to approach the Mission concerned in this regard.

Application for Hague Convention

1480. SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has applied to be a signatory in the Hague Convention;

(b) if so, the status of the application; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (c) India is a party to the following Hague Conventions:

1. Convention of 5 October 1961 Abolishing the Requirement of Legalization for Foreign Public Documents.
2. Convention of 15 November 1965 on the Service Abroad of Judicial and Extrajudicial Documents in Civil or Commercial Matters.
3. Convention of 18 March 1970 on the Taking of Evidence Abroad in Civil or Commercial Matters.
4. Convention of 29 May 1993 on Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Inter Country Adoption.

However, India is not yet a Member of the Hague Conference. Its request for it has been approved by the member states of the Hague Conference under the provisions of the Statute of the Hague Conference. India's Instrument of Accession has been forwarded to the Indian Embassy at the Hague for deposit with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

Opening of Facilitation Centres

1481. SHRIMATI PREMA CARIAPPA: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry has opened/running facilitation Centres for the Peoples' of Indian Origin (PIO);

(b) if so, the details thereof showing the number of such centres, its locations, activities and functions etc.; and

(c) if not, whether Government is proposing/planning to open such centres and by when and the various locations where it is to be opened?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (c) Minisry of Overseas Indian Affairs has set up an Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC) as a not-for-profit Trust under the Indian Trust Act, 1982, in partnership with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), for serving the interests of overseas Indians.

The Centre is located in Gurgaon. The objectives of the Centre are to promote overseas Indian investments into India, establish and maintain a Diaspora Knowledge Network (DKN), function as a clearing house for all investment related information, assist States in India to project investment opportunities to overseas Indians in the infrastructure and social sectors and to provide a host of advisory services to Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) and non Resident Indians (NRIs) on matters such as consular questions, stay in India, investment and financial issues etc. The Centre is fully functional and successfully organized a Market Place during the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2008, in which many one-to-one Business meetings were organized on Investment and Infrastructure related Sectors.

Exploitation of workers in Gulf States

1482. MS. MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is exploitation of unskilled Indian workers in the Gulf States;

(b) the steps Government plans to rectify this situation; and

(c) whether there is some minimum wages entitlement by Indians?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) Complaints are received from time to time regarding non/delayed payment of wages, poor living and working conditions, replacement of contracts etc. Action is taken on such complaints through the Indian Missions.

(b) Workers in the informal sector do not have the protection of labour law in the Gulf States. The Government has, therefore, made it mandatory that the labour contracts of unskilled workers are attested by the Indian Missions concerned before emigration clearance is granted to them. In order to ensure the protection and welfare of the Indian emigrant workers, the Ministry has been signing bilateral MoUs on Labour. In December, 2006 the Government signed an MoU with the UAE and in April, 2007 with Kuwait. In November 2007 an Additional Protocol with Qatar was signed to update the 1985 Agreement. MoUs are being finalized with Malaysia and Oman. MoUs are also being pursued with Bahrain and Yemen. These MoUs provide for protection of workers in the informal sector. Further, the MoUs provide resolution of bilateral labour issues through the mechanism of a Joint Working Group.

A number of Policy measures for the protection and welfare of emigrant workers are under implementation namely:—

1. Installation of a helpline for overseas Indian workers and potential emigrants;
2. Prescribing a minimum wage for women domestic workers;
3. Stipulation of a security deposit for a particular amount per worker from the foreign employer directly hiring any Indian worker;
4. Age restriction of 30 years to apply to all women emigrants holding ECR endorsed passports;
5. Compulsory attestation of Employment Contract by the Indian Missions;
6. Media campaign to educate potential women emigrants;